

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 EB-08 FRB-03 INR-07
NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02 CIEP-01
LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 STR-04 ITC-01
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-----151433Z 048306 /45

R 151304Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2388
INFO USDA WASHDC
USDOC WASHDC
AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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ATHENS FOR AGATT

E.O . 11652: NA
TAGS: PFOR EAGR BEXP BU
SUBJECT: CALL ON MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

REF: A. SOFIA 0219 B. SOFIA 0283

1. AMBASSADOR CALLED ON MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND
FOOD INDUSTRY GANCHO KRUSTEV FEB 11 TO DISCUSS
POSSIBILITIES OF US-GOB COOPERATION IN FIELD OF
AGRICULTURE. TOPICS INCLUDED PENDING US VISIT BY
BULGARIAN AGRICULTURAL SPECIALISTS, STATUS OF SILISTRA,
AND OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS. MEETING WAS ALSO ATTENDED
BY DEPUTY MINISTER FILIP ISHPEKOV, WHOM WE KNOW WELL
FROM HIS PREVIOUS POSITION AS ASSISTANT TO IVAN POPOV
AND OGNAN DOYNOV IN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.

2. AGRICULTURAL SPECIALISTS VISIT. AMBASSADOR, AFTER
REVIEWING HISTORY OF FALSE STARTS ON DELEGATION VISIT,
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EMPHASIZED THAT INVITATION WAS STILL OPEN. IT INVOLVED
DISCUSSION OF COOPERATION IN TECHNICAL
MATTERS, AND HAD NEVER BEEN INTENDED TO BE ON POLITICAL
LEVEL. IN EXPLAINING REASONS FOR DELAY OF DELEGATION,
KRUSTEV STATED THAT MINISTRY HAD SUBMITTED TO US DRAFT
OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION "AGREEMENT" AND MINISTRY
WAS AWAITING REPLY. (COMMENT: RECHECK SHOWS EMBASSY

HAS NOT RPT NOT RECEIVED ANY DRAFT. WE WILL COMMUNICATE THIS TO KRUSTEV. BESIDES, WHAT HAD BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION WAS POSSIBILITY OF A JOINT "STATEMENT" ON COOPERATION AND NOT CONCLUSION OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT.) KRUSTEV SAID THAT GOB REMAINED READY TO SIGN COOPERATION DOCUMENT AND SUGGESTED THAT AGRICULTURE SPECIALISTS ACCOMPANYING BULGARIAN-US JOINT ECONOMIC COUNCIL (BUSEC) DELEGATION MIGHT ALSO SERVE AS MEMBERS OF TEAM TO HOLD THE REQUISITE DISCUSSION WITH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

3. KRUSTEV DID NOT SAY WHO FROM MINISTRY MIGHT ATTEND BUSEC MEETING MARCH 13-16 OR IF ADDITIONAL PERSONS WOULD BE ALONG FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF AGRICULTURAL DISCUSSIONS. HE SAID THAT VISIT BY MANAHILOV (REF A) WAS NOT CERTAIN SINCE HE HAS RECENTLY TAKEN OVER AS DIRECTOR OF FTO AGROKOMPLEKT. KRUSTEV ADDED HOWEVER THAT AGRICULTURAL DELEGATE WOULD BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE ON SILISTRA-RELATED ACTIVITY.

4. SILISTRA. KRUSTEV, WHO CHAIRS SCIENTIFIC AND PRODUCTION COUNCIL FOR SILISTRA, SAID THAT COMMITTEE FOUND FIRST DRAFT OF GLOBE REPORT TO BE THOROUGH, BUT PROPOSED PRODUCTION LEVELS NOT AS HIGH AS EXPECTED. THIS HAD BEEN A DISAPPOINTMENT. AMBASSADOR ASKED IF THIS HAD NOT BEEN REMEDIED IN REVISED DRAFT. DEPUTY MINISTER ISHPEKOV RESPONDED THAT REVISED DRAFT HAD NOT YET BEEN FULLY TRANSLATED FOLLOWING PRESENTATION DURING LAST WEEK OF JANUARY.

5. MEAT PLANTS AND MEAT EXPORTS TO US. IN RESPONSE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AMBASSADOR'S QUERY AS TO HOW EMBASSY COULD ASSIST IN THIS AREA, KRUSTEV RESPONDED THAT SIGNING GENERAL COOPERATION "AGREEMENT" IN AGRICULTURE COULD GIVE IMPETUS TO THIS AREA OF TRADE. HE URGED THAT DETAILS COULD BE SETTLED LATER. ISHPEKOV COMMENTED THAT GOB WAS ALREADY WORKING SERIOUSLY WITH US COMPANIES TO PUT EXISTING BULGARIAN PLANS IN CONDITION TO BE RE-CERTIFIED FOR MEAT SALES TO US. KRUSTEV ADDED THAT REAL BARRIER TO SALES OF BULGARIAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS WAS HIGH TARIFFS DUE TO LACK OF MFN, NOT INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS PER SE.

6. AGRICULTURAL PERFORMANCE. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION ON RELATIVELY POOR AGRICULTURAL PERFORMANCE DURING 1976, KRUSTEV SAID THAT YEAR HAD NOT BEEN EASY, BUT OVERALL WAS SUCCESSFUL. HE WOULD BE HAPPY WITH SEVERAL YEARS SUCH AS THIS ONE, AND OFFERED NO OTHER INFORMATION ON POOR PERFORMANCE IN KEY AREAS SUCH AS FODDER, MILK PRODUCTS AND VEGETABLES (ON WHICH HIS MINISTRY WAS RECENTLY CRITICIZED, REF B).

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7. ORGANIZATION OF MINISTRY ACTIVITIES. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF FORMER DEPUTY MINISTER VURBAN DZHAMBOV (WHO HAD BEEN OUR MOST PRODUCTIVE CONTACT IN THIS MINISTRY), KRUSTEV SAID THAT DZHAMBOV HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED TO MINISTRY OF MACHINE BUILDING AND WAS CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURAL, TRANSPORT AND CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY. IN THAT CAPACITY HE ALSO HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR PENDING PROJECTS WITH FMC (WHICH INVOLVE ASSEMBLY OF FARM MACHINERY IN BULGARIA). ISHPEKOV STATED THAT HIS OWN JOB INVOLVED SUPERVISION OF ALL FOREIGN TRADE ACTIVITY OF MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE WHICH NOW HAD ASSUMED FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR FTO'S IN THIS AREA. (FTOS INCLUDE RODOPAIMPEX, BULGARPLODEXPORT, BULGARCOOP, BULGARCONSERV, BULGARTABAK, HRANEXPORT, RIBNOSTOPANSTVO AND ZAHARIMPEX).

8. COMMENT: KRUSTEV, WHILE PLEASANT, SEEMED TO BE LESS THAN FULLY ALERT TO CONVERSATION. WITH EXCEPTION OF MINOR DETAILS ON SILISTRA, HE SPOKE ENTIRELY IN GENERALITIES AND AVOIDED SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT. FACT THAT
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HE WAS PERSONALLY SEVERELY CRITICIZED IN PUBLIC ONLY
TWO DAYS BEFORE BY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MAY ACCOUNT FOR
THIS SEEMING PRE-OCCUPATION. IN GENERAL, ISHPEKOV'S
FILL-IN COMMENTS WERE MORE INFORMATIVE AND USEFUL THAN
KRUSTEV'S.
HERZ

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